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SIPDIS

FOR AF A/S NEWMAN

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SUBJECT: RECOMMEND POTUS MEET WITH PRESIDENT OBASANJO

REF: ABUJA 1486

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for Reasons 1.5 (B & D).

1. (C) U.S. Mission recommends POTUS, or the Secretary, meet with Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo during his September 21-24 trip to the United States, to thank and encourage Obasanjo on Darfur, Liberia and Nigeria's domestic reforms, and to raise the level of our bilateral dialogue on oil and terrorism. President Obasanjo is also president of the African Union this year, and is the preeminent leader of the West African regional organization ECOWAS.

2. (C) U.S. Mission proposes a 3-subject meeting:

-- Thanks for Darfur and Liberia. Hope your NEEDS/SEEDS economic reform program succeeds in order that Nigeria can move ahead.

-- Please tell me (POTUS) about your Gulf of Guinea Initiative, which deals with the political, trade and security changes affecting this important oil region.

-- I (POTUS) am especially concerned because of the continuing violence in Nigeria's Delta region, the fifth largest supplier of oil to the U.S., and because of the potential for terrorism manifest in Osama Bin Laden's stated intent to bring Al Qaeda to Nigeria.

RATIONALE

3. (C) While we need to sound the right notes with Obasanjo on Darfur and economic reform, the meeting's overriding purpose is to raise and broaden our dialogue with Nigeria on oil and terrorism. As analyzed in Reftel, the violence, corruption, environmental damage and sheer lawlessness of Nigeria's energy-rich Delta is becoming a threat to U.S. oil supplies now and natural gas supplies in the future. The Delta is the fifth largest source of U.S. oil imports, and President Obasanjo needs to muster the political will to re-establish GON control in the region.

4. (C) Also as analyzed elsewhere, Osama Bin Laden has already publicly named target-rich Nigeria, with its millions of alienated citizens, as an area for Al Qaeda operations. There too, the key point is the GON giving priority to grappling with the problem.

5. (C) President Obasanjo's Gulf of Guinea Initiative, still nascent, addresses both oil and terrorism, and may well contain the seeds for U.S. cooperation on those and other important issues. We need to draw him out farther, and indicate both U.S. readiness and priority for grappling with these problems.

SCHEDULE

6. (SBU) President Obasanjo expects to arrive in Boston September 20 for meetings there September 21. He will be at UNGA in New York September 22-23, where he will have events as both President of Nigeria and president of the African Union. His current plan is to leave the U.S. on September 24.
CAMPBELL